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BJ Staffer Recalls Fund-Raising With NSA

Beacon Journal staffer Craig Wilson was public relations director for the National Student Association from September, 1949, to November, 1950. The group has been reported to have received CIA money since the early 50s.

By CRAIG WILSON

The plot thickens? Or does it just get stickier under foot?

In any case, I find myself writing another piece about my former life as a young student do-gooder with the National Student Association.

My memories of it all are still the same. Only the facts have been changed.

It has now been revealed that a pair of \$600 donations I helped solicit from private sources really amounted to \$6,000 each.

And the money WAS Central Intelligence Agency cash.

The CIA-link was known, not to me, but to the fellow student who conducted these negotiations with me.

THE negotiations which sent us traipsing from Madison, Wis., to Chicago, to Washington to Wilmington, Del., and to New York, was just a "charade."

The object of it all was to convince other NSA officers that a genuine solicitation was undertaken.

All this occurred in the Spring of 1950, about two years earlier than any previous allegations of an NSA-CIA financial link by Ramparts Magazine or anyone else.

My co-negotiator was Frederic Delano Houghteling, a cousin of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a Harvard College student and ex-Marine. When I met him, I had just been named public relations director and he executive secretary. We roomed together at Madison, Wis., and he owned — and bought the gas for — the Chevy called "Matilda."

HOUGHTELING is now an attorney for the Civil Aeronautics Board in Washington.

When the original story broke, I sent him a copy of my NSA recollections. He replied:

"Our trip was a piece of a charade. I played my part. You played yours. The difference was that I was in on the secret and you weren't."

He describes how a good Washington friend visited him at Madison while NSA is casting about for ways to finance student goodwill trips around the world:

"We go for a ride out near Madison (Wis.) Airport. We stop. We pick up two men I haven't met before. Their names? Jones and Brown, perhaps — I don't remember.

"They say that 'the government' is interested in NSA and its problems. About time, say I. A pause. Then: Have I heard they explain it.

"Am I willing? Yes.

"We get out of the car. I take the oath.

"Then, the revelation: The State Department wants the delegation to go. The CIA, blessed with an unaudited pocket, will supply the money. Any objection? No.

"A FEW days later, I get my orders. Visit X and Y, make a pitch, take someone with you. The money will arrive thereafter.

"Later I announce at the office that I, through my valuable family connections, have a couple of hot prospects. Joy at Draper School. Houghteling and Wilson dispatched to make the sale."

Houghteling, an executive secretary at the time, was in a position to know that the association had not previously received donations from private, anonymous or shadowy sources. This incident, then, stands as the curtain-raiser on NSA involvement with CIA.

Houghteling, incidentally, was no campus radical. The only time he turns "pink" is when friends recall his short-lived attempt to form a "Democrats for Eisenhower Committee." This causes him to blush with embarrassment.